Module 3
Understanding Employer Expectations
Work Readiness Curriculum

Module 3: Understanding Employer Expectations

Module Overview:
Module 3 will support the trainees in learning how to meet potential employers’ expectations. Trainees will learn the components of professionalism including professional attitude, appearance, and attendance. Trainees will also explore workplace rules; both written and unwritten. Finally, trainees will focus on the importance of effective communication skills in the workplace.

Topics Covered:
Professionalism
Workplace Rules (Written and Unwritten)
Using Effective Communication Skills

Desired Outcomes:
At the completion of Module 3, trainees will understand the employer’s expectation that their employees look and act like a professional in the workplace. Trainees will also have an understanding of acceptable and unacceptable items and activities for the workplace. Trainees will be able to describe common written and unwritten rules of the workplace, and understand that the unwritten rules are those that are specific to the workplace culture. Finally, trainees will leave this module with 1-3 communication goals that will help them to better communicate in the workplace.
Trainee Career Portfolio

Throughout the Work Readiness curriculum, trainees will be creating and maintaining a career portfolio. Provide each trainee with a folder or 3-ring binder that will work as their career portfolio. Different activity sheets will be completed by the trainee and then should be added to their career portfolio. These activity sheets can be later used when preparing for a job. Career portfolios should be kept in a safe place that is easily accessible.

The following sheets from this module will be added to the trainee’s career portfolio:

- No sheets from this module are needed for the career portfolio
Module Vocabulary

Before conducting the job readiness activities in this module, review the following key vocabulary words with the trainees. Use vocabulary word cards to help introduce the words. Present each card separately and give a brief explanation of each word. Explain to the trainees that each word will be discussed in more detail throughout the module to help them understand it better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>communication</th>
<th>positive attitude</th>
<th>rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>non-verbal communication</td>
<td>first impression</td>
<td>unwritten rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbal communication</td>
<td>appearance</td>
<td>professionalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**VOCABULARY WORD CARDS**
Cut out each word card to introduce key vocabulary words for Module 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>communication</th>
<th>positive attitude</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbal communication</td>
<td>appearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VOCABULARY WORD CARDS

Cut out each word card to introduce key vocabulary words for Module 3.

- rules
- unwritten
- rules
- professionalism
Lesson 1:

Professionalism in the Workplace

*Description of the Activity:*

*In this activity trainees will learn that professional workers have a positive attitude, clean and neat appearance, and excellent attendance.*

| Lesson Materials | 1. PowerPoint Slides 2-14 (Also available in PDF)  
2. Chart Paper and marker  
3. “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.1.1 |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Instructor Preparation | 1. Preview PowerPoint/PDF slide 2-14.  
2. Gather chart paper and a marker.  
3. Make copies of activity 3.1.1 as needed. |

| Lesson Details | 1. Begin the lesson displaying PowerPoint/PDF slide 2. Use this slide to define “professionalism.”  
2. On your chart paper, create the following chart: |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Attitude</th>
<th>Professional Appearance</th>
<th>Professional Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EX. <em>Smiles at others, takes on tasks without complaining, willingness to do any task, does each task to the best of his/her ability</em></td>
<td>EX. <em>wears assigned uniform, showered, neat looking (combed hair, ironed clothes...etc)</em></td>
<td>EX. <em>Shows up on time, doesn’t miss work, if needed, calls ahead of time for being sick or late</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Emphasize that the trainees should try to get an “A+ in professionalism.” Discuss the meaning of each term that begins with an “A.”  
4. Have trainees share possible ways to show your professionalism through your attitude, appearance and attendance. See possible responses in the chart above.
Lesson Activity:
1. After discussing the three “A’s” of professionalism, together as a group, view the scenarios on PowerPoint/PDF slides 3-14.
2. Have an in depth conversation about each scenario and discuss the professional actions that should happen in response to each situation. In addition, discuss what the unprofessional thing to do would be as a way to discuss “what NOT to do.”

Lesson Reflection:
1. Use the following prompts to engage trainees in discussion:
   - Why is it important to act professional?
   - Which part of professionalism do you think will be the easiest for you? Most challenging?
   - How might an employer respond if he/she saw someone acting unprofessional?
2. Either as a whole class, or individually complete the “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.1.1.
Lesson 1: Professionalism in the Workplace

Activity 3.1.1

3, 2, 1 REVIEW!

THREE new things that you have learned today.
TWO things that you will work on for homework.
ONE thing that we should review again.

3

2

1
Lesson 2:
Professional or Play?
Adapted from “Professional Behavior at Work” / Module 11 for the Vocational Connections Curriculum – CHS 2014

Description of the Activity:
In this activity trainees will explore what items and activities are appropriate in the workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Several items to represent professional or play items in the workplace (ex. watch, headphones/iPod, hairbrush, pad of paper, flip flops, magazine, football/baseball, cell phone, pillow, time sheet, squirt gun, balloons, gum, candy, family photo, uniform, pocket knife, nail polish, crossword puzzle book) OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Professional or Play” picture cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chart paper and marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gather several items (examples listed above) that can be used to represent items that are appropriate (professional) or inappropriate (play) for the workplace. You will want several examples of each. Place the items in a box. If gathering several items is not an option, print off a set of the “professional or play” picture cards that can be used to represent items. Place cards in a bag or basket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gather chart paper and a marker.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Introduction:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Begin the lesson by reviewing what it means to be a professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Explain that there are some items and activities that are appropriate during work hours, some during lunch time and breaks and some never at the worksite. Workers need to be aware that how and when they use items or engage particular behaviors indicates how seriously they take their job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Activity:
1. Ask trainees to come up one-by-one and pick one item out of the box. (Or, if using the picture cards, have trainees choose one card at a time to discuss)
2. Ask the trainee to provide one of three answers:
   - YES – this can be used at work
   - NO – this should never be used at work
   - MAYBE – it might be able to be used during break or lunch
3. Confirm whether they are correct or not, and have a discussion with the group as to why.
4. For each MAYBE answer, write the name of the item on the chart paper with a marker and explain that you will return to each of these items later.
5. After all trainees have chosen an item and given an answer, return to the “maybe” list and facilitate a discussion about each of the items with the group. (i.e.: Can this be used at all during a break or should it remain at home?) For example, a magazine shouldn’t be used during work time, but could be appropriate to read during a lunch break).

Lesson Reflection:
1. Use the following prompts to engage trainees in discussion:
   - What if a co-worker brings a NO item to work?
   - Even if someone else is not “professional” do you still need to be and why?
   - What could happen if you did something unprofessional?
2. As a group or as individuals, complete “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.1.1.
Cut out each “Professional or Play?” picture card and place in a bag/basket.
Cut out each picture card and place in a bag or basket.
Cut out each picture card and place in a bag or basket.
Lesson 2: Professional or Play?

Activity 3.2.1

3,2,1 REVIEW!

THREE new things that you have learned today.
TWO things that you will work on for homework.
ONE thing that we should review again.

3

2

1
Lesson 3:
Written and Unwritten Rules in the Workplace

Description of the Activity:
In this activity trainees will explore common workplace rules as well as unwritten rules that may exist.

| Lesson Materials | 1. PowerPoint Slides 15-27 (Also available in PDF)  
|                  | 2. Chart paper and marker  
|                  | 3. “Written and Unwritten Rules” Activity 3.3.1  
|                  | 4. “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.3.2  
|                  | 5. “Workplace Rules in Real Life” Activity 3.3.2  

| Instructor Preparation | 1. Preview PowerPoint/PDF slides 15-27.  
|                        | 2. Collect chart paper and a marker.  
|                        | 3. Print off enough copies of 3.3.1, 3.3.2, and 3.3.3 activity sheets as needed.  

Lesson Details

Lesson Introduction:
1. Begin the lesson by displaying PowerPoint/PDF slide 15. Have trainees give the definition of a rule in their own words. Decide on a definition as a group, and write the definition with a marker on your chart paper.
2. Have trainees share some common rules that they follow in their every day life. Make a list of those rules on the chart paper underneath the definition.
3. Have a brief discussion on why rules are important. Also discuss what some of the consequences would be if the rule was not followed.
Lesson Activity (Part 1):

1. Explain that just like there are rules at home, there are rules in the workplace to help things run smoothly, keep order, and allow people to remain safe.

2. Display PowerPoint slide/PDF slide 16. Look at a sample page of the employee handbook. (Option: You can also print out several copies for the trainees if you would like to have them look at it in person. Download the full PDF at the following link: https://www.humanservicesed.org/filehandler.ashx?x=8294)

3. ASK: What is an employee handbook? Explain that workplaces create a handbook with a list of rules and procedures that are specific to their workplace. Tell trainees that by agreeing to work at a certain place, they are agreeing to follow the rules and procedures of the workplace. Explain that these are the “written rules” of the workplace.

4. Display PowerPoint/PDF slide 17. Use this slide to explain what a written rule is.

5. Provide trainees with the “Written and Unwritten Rules” Activity 3.3.1 sheet and create a 2-column chart on the chart paper:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written Rules</th>
<th>Unwritten Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Explain that they will be getting into teams of 3-4. Teams will be shown a picture. After looking at the picture, each team will have 30 seconds (or another specified time limit) to discuss what written work rule might be associated with the picture. Once each team has come up with a rule, the team will announce the workplace rule that is connected to the picture. Then, you will write the rule under the “written rules” column. Trainees will write the rule on their activity sheet. There may be more than one rule associated with each picture. Write down all appropriate responses.

7. Display PowerPoint/PDF slides 18-25 to show the different images. OPTIONAL: Use a bell or buzzer to let the team know it is time to give an answer.
### Written and Unwritten Rules in the Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. After a rule has been established by the teams, discuss the rule as a whole group. (Possible discussion questions: Does this rule seem reasonable? Why might this rule exist in the workplace? What consequences might occur if this rule is not followed?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Once you have gone through all of the pictures, read though all of the rules once again as a review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Lesson Activity (Part 2):

1. Explain that now that trainees understand the written rules of the workplace, they are going discuss another kind of rule; the unwritten rules.
2. Display PowerPoint/PDF slide 26 to explain what an unwritten rule is.
3. Trainees will continue to work on their activity 3.3.1 sheet, this time focusing on the “unwritten rules” section. Explain that we have unwritten rules in our own lives.
4. Either as individuals, working in their teams from “Lesson Activity (Part 1),” or as a whole group have trainees work through this section of the activity sheet on unwritten rules. Trainees will be discussing unwritten rules in their own lives.
5. Then, draw trainee’s attention back to the 2-column chart on written and unwritten rules. Work together to discuss and write down possible unwritten rules that may exist at the work place. Since these rules are a little more difficult to understand, give students the following prompts:
   - What might be an unwritten rule about how employees interact with their employer?
   - What unwritten rules might there be about how employees interact with each other?
   - What unwritten rules might exist in the break room?
**Lesson 3 (continued)**

**Written and Unwritten Rules in the Workplace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Details</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Lesson Reflection:**

1. Display PowerPoint/PDF slide 27. Use this slide to discuss how you go about learning the unwritten rules of a workplace.

2. Use the following prompts to for discussion:
   - Why do workplace rules exist?
   - What do you do if you don't understand a workplace rule?
   - What do you do if you don't agree with a workplace rule?
   - What if you have a suggestion for a new or different rule?

3. Complete the “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.3.2 sheet as individuals or as a whole group.

**Homework:**

1. Provide trainees with the “Workplace Rules in Real Life” Activity 3.3.3 sheet. Explain that you would like them to choose a friend or family member that has a job, and interview them on the written and unwritten rules of their workplace.

2. Trainees will record the responses of the person being interviewed on their sheet. Trainees should be prepared to discuss responses the next time you meet.
Lesson 3: Written and Unwritten Rules in the Workplace

Activity 3.3.1

Written and Unwritten Rules

Written rules are rules that a workplace specifically announces to their employees.

As you view different images, work with your team to come up with a possible work rule that each image represents.

Written Rules of the Workplace
Activity 3.3.1 (continued)

**Unwritten rules** are rules that are NOT specifically announced to employees. They are rules about workplace behavior and culture.

We even have unwritten rules in our own lives. Think about some unwritten rules that exist in your home.

**Example:**

> Although its not written down anywhere, your family just knows that it’s not OK to just borrow something from your room without asking first.

Unwritten rules between you and your friends:

Unwritten rules at your school or program:

Unwritten rules between you and your family:
Lesson 3: Written and Unwritten Rules in the Workplace

Activity 3.3.2

Workplace Rules in Real Life

Think about someone you know that has a job. Interview them about the different written and unwritten rules in the workplace.

Person being interviewed: ____________________________
Company: _________________________________________

Ask the person you are interviewing about the following rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dress Code</th>
<th>Is there a Written Rule?</th>
<th>Is there an Unwritten Rule?</th>
<th>The Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing/uniform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear and socks or stockings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry and accessories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingernails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makeup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 3.3.2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using Equipment and Resources</th>
<th>Is there a Written Rule?</th>
<th>Is there an Unwritten Rule?</th>
<th>The Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage of the company phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of personal cell phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of computer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of copier, printer, fax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and/or drink at workstation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Activity 3.3.2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everyday Protocol</th>
<th>Is there a Written Rule?</th>
<th>Is there an Unwritten Rule?</th>
<th>The Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start time/End time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking breaks (time and location)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating and drinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of employee lounge or other areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Activity 3.3.2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unusual Circumstances</th>
<th>Is there a Written Rule?</th>
<th>Is there an Unwritten Rule?</th>
<th>The Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable reasons of absence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are late</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are sick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing schedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to come in late or leave work early</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you need help/have questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 3.3.2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Is there a Written Rule?</th>
<th>Is there an Unwritten Rule?</th>
<th>The Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socializing during work time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are birthdays and holidays recognized?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special work terms or language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation pranks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do employees spend time together outside of work such as bowling, softball, happy hour, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any social customs workers follow to fit in socially? (coffee fund, water fund, occasional donuts, etc...)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 3: Written and Unwritten Rules in the Workplace

Activity 3.3.3

3,2,1 REVIEW!

THREE new things that you have learned today.
TWO things that you will work on for homework.
ONE thing that we should review again.

3

2

1
Lesson 4: Communications at Work

**Description of the Activity:**
In this activity trainees will explore ways to be effective listeners and communicators in the workplace.

| Lesson Materials | 1. PowerPoint Slides 28-32 (Also available in PDF)  
2. “Qualities of Excellent Communication” Activity 3.4.1  
3. “Communicating at Work” Activity 3.4.2  
4. “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.4.3 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Instructor Preparation | 1. Preview PowerPoint/PDF slides 28-32.  
2. Make enough copies of Activities 3.4.1, 3.4.2, and 3.4.3 as needed. |

**Lesson Introduction:**
1. Begin the lesson by asking: *How would you describe the perfect listener?* Allow trainees to share their thoughts and give examples.
2. Discuss the meaning of “communication” and explain that communication skills play a huge role in how others see them.
3. **ASK:** *Who do you know who communicates well? What do they do that makes them strong communicators?* Allow for discussion.
4. Explain that people can give a strong message without even using any words. This is called non-verbal communication.
5. Together view **PowerPoint/PDF slides 28-31.** With each slide, read the situation and discuss what message is being sent by the way a person communicates.
Lesson Activity:

1. Provide each trainee with the “Qualities of Excellent Communication” Activity 3.4.1 sheet.
2. Discuss each item, pointing out that no one is perfect, but the handout is a list of excellent communication skills to try to develop.
3. After completing the handout as a group, divide the class into pairs and ask them to discuss each item again. They should focus on how to improve the skill.
4. Each trainee, with help from a partner or a support professional, should set 1-3 personal goals for improving communication. For example, goals might be:
   - Take time to ask clear questions when I need information.
   - Practice listening to questions before responding when I speak with other people.
5. Next, ASK: Does your communication change when you get emotional? (ex. stressed, tired, surprised, rude, frustrated, embarrassed, overwhelmed, confused...etc.)
6. Have a discussion with trainees about how they may communicate differently if their emotions change. For example, if a person becomes embarrassed, he/she may hang their head low and begin to ignore others.
7. Stressing the importance of having good communication skills, even when their emotions change, will help them to be taken seriously at home, in their program, and at work. For example, if they do not feel that their suggestions are taken seriously they need to make sure that they are not shouting or interrupting and have expressed their concerns effectively.
8. Pass out the “Communications at Work” Activity 3.4.2 sheet. As a large group, either have trainees write in their responses, or have a group discussion about the prompts on the activity sheet.
9. Finally, explain that there are some simple ways to send a positive message to those around you. View PowerPoint/PDF slide 32 to discuss these ways.

Lesson Reflection:

1. As a whole group, or as individuals, complete the “3-2-1 Review!” Activity 3.4.3 sheet.
Lesson 4: Communication at Work

Activity 3.4.1

Qualities of Excellent Communication

Check off the qualities below that you feel apply to you.

_____ Good communicators do not do all the talking.
_____ Good communicators think before they respond.
_____ Good communicators get to the point.
_____ Good communicators look the speaker in the eye.
_____ Good communicators look in the listener’s eyes when speaking.
_____ Good communicators pay attention to the speaker’s words, tone of voice, and body language.
_____ Good communicators pay attention to their own words, tone of voice, and body language.
_____ Good communicators try to listen to what people are saying, not just how they are saying it.
_____ Good communicators do not interrupt (although sometimes it is tempting).
_____ Good communicators constantly evaluate their communication skills.
Activity 3.4.1 (continued)

**My Communication Goals:**

Now, choose a communication skill that you would like to improve on and list some actions you will take to improve those skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication skill I’d like to work on:</th>
<th>Ways I will work to improve this skill:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 4: Communication at Work

Activity 3.4.2

Communicating at Work

How will you show that you are...

...pleased, when another worker is unfriendly?

...calm, when the stress level is high?

...prepared, when your boss needs information?

...confident, when a new task is presented?

...reliable, when your boss needs a job done?

...taking your job seriously?
Lesson 4: Communication at Work

Activity 3.4.3

3,2,1 REVIEW!

THREE new things that you have learned today.
TWO things that you will work on for homework.
ONE thing that we should review again.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>